

**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS  
WORK SESSION  
February 13, 2019  
5:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

Members Present: Jonathan Elmore, Mayor  
Brian Fisher, Mayor Pro Tem  
Adela Yelton, Commissioner  
Lionel Laratte, Commissioner  
Lisa Shortell, Commissioner

Staff Present: Patrick Bryant, City Manager  
Keri Stevens, Assistant City Manager  
Paul Hanebuth, Finance Director  
Gina Hill, City Clerk  
Stephen Quinn, City Attorney

Item No. 1 Meeting Called to Order

Item No. 2 Adoption of Agenda  
Commissioner Laratte moves to adopt agenda. Commissioner Shortell seconds. All ayes.

Item No. 3 **Davenport & Company Presents Bonds 101**  
A representative from Davenport & Company will present a general overview of public financing options available to municipalities. They will return for the March work session to present the City with a long-range capital plan and specific recommendations to finance the projects contained within that plan.

City Manager Bryant prefaces this discussion by saying this will not include any specific recommendations for the City and is informational only. Doug Gebhardt, Vice President of Davenport & Company, starts with a market overview. He covers tax and interest rates, for example, saying things are strong. He explains how credit ratings work. Credit ratings factor into how bonds are priced, he offers. Mr. Gebhardt moves on to explain the various types of bonds. Members of the BOMC ask several questions. How bonds are issued, length of time, and so on follow. General timelines are explained by Mr. Gebhardt and then he moves on to debt capacity and debt affordability. He talks about how these are measured and gave some anecdotes about other cities. Mr. Gebhardt wraps up his presentation. Mr. Bryant says the City's executive team is planning to meet with Davenport officials soon before any

recommendations are given to the BOMC. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher and Commissioner Yelton offer their comments. Mr. Bryant notes that the current policies should be looked at because the City's lack of debt history could make it harder to borrow money. Mr. Gebhardt described some small changes that could be made. Commissioner Shortell thanks Mr. Gebhardt and Commissioner Laratte asks that the presentation be posted on the City website.

Item No. 4

**Annexation Update**

The Board of Mayor and Commissioners (BOMC) will discuss the draft feasibility study. Kris Sikes, of the Carl Vinson Institute, will present the findings in detail at the March work session.

City Manager Bryant tells the group that staff has received a draft report from the Carl Vinson Institute and this was being discussed to only get feedback from the BOMC before the final report is issued. He adds staff is not prepared to discuss anything further. However, he says the draft report will be posted on the City's website and he wants this process to be as transparent as possible. Mr. Bryant asks the BOMC to email their feedback to City staff by the end of the following week. Mayor Elmore goes around the table to get feedback. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher observes there are many people in the audience from areas on the annexation map so he gives them some background on how and why we are at this point. He reiterates the goal of being transparent. Mr. Bryant adds that a media outlet reported inaccurately that tonight's discussion would be more indepth. Mayor Elmore tells the audience that Avondale needs to diversify its tax base to be able to fund infrastructure projects. He also feels that Avondale can provide better services to the areas under consideration. This study, he says, is just to look at the "what if's". Commissioner Shortell offers that the County is also doing a study regarding the cities. Mr. Bryant says that before any further discussion takes place, the final study will be posted on the City website.

A woman living across from the Kensington Marta station says it would be helpful if the tax data in the study took future development into account. She also requested that information be included that would tell them how much their taxes would be raised by being a part of Avondale. Another neighboring resident asked if the study would outline different scenarios. Mayor Elmore answers that that information will be included since the study is already itemized to a degree. Another audience member asked what method the BOMC would use should they decide to annex. Mr. Bryant responds there is no plan to annex at all at this point. The topic of an unused park and recreation center was brought up by a resident at 3043 Wells St. She said they would be good additions to the City should the BOMC decide to attempt annexation.

Item No. 5

**Downtown Development Update**

This update will include a discussion of the release of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) regarding the commercial construction portion of the City/DDA 5-acre development project. Staff will also provide the

BOMC with an update on the central business district (CBD) parking solution.

City Manager Bryant lets the BOMC know that the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is looking for a group to design a parking lot on their newly-acquired property in downtown. City staff will assist the DDA with getting the project completed. Also, City staff will be releasing a request for qualifications (RFQ) for the commercially developed portion of the City-owned four acres. He explains that the subsequent requests for proposals (RFPs) for the commercial development and town green will be released simultaneously. A copy of the draft RFQ will be given to the Board for feedback before it's issued. He would like comments by the end of the following week. Mr. Bryant also gave an update on the street grid study and US 278 redesign project. Mayor Elmore says this is very exciting and asks about the zoning rewrite. Mr. Bryant says that RFP will also be released next week. There was discussion about whether or not groups interested in developing the commercial part of the four acres could also do the town green. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher had questions about the RFQ process. Commissioner Yelton thanks City staff for their hard work. Commissioner Shortell agrees. She still has some concerns about storm water. Commissioner Laratte says he's very happy with how things are moving.

Brad Jones asks if the RFP for the town green will just be for designers or a firm to design/build. Mr. Bryant says it could be either and those talks are ongoing. Martha Teall asks if the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) will be able to see the RFP for the zoning rewrite. Assistant City Manager Stevens describes the upcoming meetings for the US 278 redesign project. Resident Paul Dorrah has questions about the RFQ/RFP process. Kathy Kingsbury asked if the grading rubric for grading the RFQ was available to the public. Mr. Bryant says it is not but was developed by City staff and the DDA.

#### Item No. 6

#### **The Greenspace and Education Ad Hoc Committees**

These ad hoc committees were created in October of 2015. There have been preliminary discussions about their future – for example, should they continue and, if so, in what form.

Mayor Elmore says the Greenspace Committee has done a great deal of work on behalf of the BOMC. He feels they should take time to digest and analyze their data and allow the committee to disband or remain dormant. Mr. Elmore feels the Education Committee was different. They were designed to improve the relationship between the City and the local schools and school system. They've made great strides, he adds. Mr. Elmore would like that Committee to continue with possibly some new members. Commissioner Shortell would like both committees to continue. She still thinks they can be a great resource. She would like to hear from members of the Greenspace Committee. Commissioner Yelton would also like to hear from that committee. She would like the Education Committee to continue, possibly with new members. Mayor

Pro Tem Fisher says the Greenspace Committee has done a fantastic job. He would like to take time to digest their data as well. He would like to hear from both committees. Commissioner Laratte feels the Education Committee should continue. He's like to hear from the Greenspace Committee what they feel their mission would be should they move forward.

Dee Merriam believes the Greenspace Committee should be permanent even if they didn't meet regularly. Brad Jones feels the Committee can be dormant until it's needed again.

Item No. 7

### **Sign Ordinance Amendment**

The Sign Ordinance requires any monument sign to be setback 10' from the right of way (Section 5-368 (c)). The right of way (ROW), in many cases, substantially exceeds the width of the pavement. This regulation is causing sign visibility problems for new and existing businesses. Staff proposes a change to the ordinance to address this issue while keeping City-owned ROW clear of signage for the purpose of redevelopment later.

Assistant City Manager Stevens gives a presentation on this item with diagrams projected for all to see. Each member of the Board supports the change. They ask Ms. Stevens several questions. Resident Christine McMahan asks Ms. Stevens about sign distance from existing sidewalks. Kathy Kingsbury asked if this change only affected this one issue. Ms. Stevens said that's correct. Business owner Stacia Hopek thanked City staff and the BOMC for working together with her in getting this done. Renee Palmer, owner of City Dog Market, also offered thanks.

Item No. 8

### **Speed Limit Amendment**

There have been numerous complaints and concerns about speeding in the City limits. Staff will present the process to amend the speed limits.

City Manager Bryant said Commissioner Shortell asked City staff to look into this. He found there is a two-step process to changing the speed limit. First, if there is speed detection radar used, the change must be approved by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Also, there has to be a change to the ordinance. Mr. Bryant says it's staff's recommendation to gather more data, perhaps through a study. There were specific areas Ms. Shortell asked him to look into, he added, Kensington and South Avondale Plaza. Other streets may be added, per the Board's direction. Mayor Elmore is concerned about affecting other streets by lowering the speed limit in only certain areas. Ms. Shortell says she has seen traffic calming measures work on Sycamore Drive in Decatur. Commissioner Yelton asked if City staff was successful at getting Kensington off GPS phone apps. Assistant City Manager Stevens says one problem with that is that the app will just send drivers down a different street within the neighborhood. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher feels that 20 miles per hour is a more appropriate speed in the residential areas.

He also suggests narrowing down Kensington. Ms. Yelton talks about traffic and schools while Commissioner Laratte says he'd like to see data on the volume of traffic at certain times of day.

Annette Phillips, who lives on Kensington, is in favor of lowering the speed limit. She also asks why there are stop signs at the roundabout. Ms. Shortell says it's difficult for drivers to see pedestrians and bicyclists even when they do stop. Kathy Kingsbury urges more enforcement of the speed limits. Dee Merriam cites research on car speed and pedestrian injuries. She also suggested bulb outs to slow traffic.

Item No. 9

### **Communication Strategies**

A discussion of mechanisms to promote more effective communication of City business to the public.

City Manager Bryant says he had a brainstorming session with Commissioners Yelton and Shortell about new ways to communicate with the public. They discussed doing a work session recap. He also mentioned some ideas using social media. Mr. Bryant adds that Mayor Elmore had requested a discussion regarding a possible policy surrounding ex parte communication. The goal would be to avoid any conflicts of interest or legal troubles by elected officials communicating with developers or vendors. City staff plans to present a proposal to the BOMC when one is ready. Mayor Elmore thinks an ex parte policy would be protective of members of the BOMC and the gist of it would be that elected officials send potential developers and vendors directly to City staff for any discussions. He added that PZB chair, Martha Teall, had also proposed the idea of a policy. Mr. Bryant also feels it would be protective. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher does not support a policy. He explains that developers should be going directly to City staff anyway. And he feels it's valuable to be able to speak to people with certain expertise. Mr. Bryant clarifies a policy would only impact discussions with potential vendors or developers, people who stand to benefit financially by decisions the BOMC make. Commissioner Laratte supports a policy as do Commissioners Shortell and Yelton.

Joe Anziano suggests having City staff contact information on the back of the BOMC's business cards.

Item No. 10

### **Kensington Road Stormwater Update**

Plans are complete and funding has been set aside for the construction of a retention pond to reduce flooding in this area. This required purchasing easements from several property owners for underground pipes. City staff will give a status report on this project.

City Manager Bryant updated the BOMC on this project. He says one property owner would not voluntarily grant the City an easement to bury pipes. The City is seeking access through the eminent domain process and there was a hearing last week where the judge decided in the City's favor. There are still more steps but the project is moving forward. Once

the judge enters the order, the purchase of the easement must go through, and then the construction can go out for bid. City Attorney Quinn answers some procedural questions.

The BOMC thanks Mr. Quinn and City staff, as does a resident of Kensington Road.

Item No. 11

**BOMC Strategic Planning Retreat Recap**

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual retreat took place at Duluth City Hall on January 25<sup>th</sup>. It was facilitated once again by staff from the Georgia Conservancy and included all members of the BOMC and City staff. Duluth's Mayor and City Manager volunteered their time as guest speakers and tour guides.

Katherine Moore, of the Georgia Conservancy and facilitator of the retreat, thought it was good to visit Duluth and learn from them first hand. She then goes through a slideshow presentation to recap the retreat. To conclude, she suggested having another group conversation to wrap up loose ends. Mayor Elmore thanks Ms. Moore, her staff, and the mayor and city manager of Duluth. Commissioner Laratte feels it was time well spent. Commissioner Shortell found the retreat inspiring and energizing. Commissioner Yelton also gave thanks. She thinks more discussion should occur if it would be helpful to City staff. Mayor Pro Tem Fisher also found the retreat helpful. Ms. Moore offered to connect the BOMC with any other similar cities they may be interested in learning about.


Item No. 12            Public Comment: None

Item No. 13            Adjournment  
Mayor Pro Tem Fisher moves to adjourn. Commissioner Laratte seconds.  
All ayes.

APPROVED THIS 25<sup>th</sup> DAY OF FEBRUARY 2019

  
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Jonathan Elmore, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Gina Hill, City Clerk